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MONTHLY RETROSPECT OF POLITICS.

BRITISH Politics have usually been divided into FOREIGN and DOMESTIC, but, with the exception of a few ports in the south of Spain, the continent of Europe appears to be almost, if not altogether closed against these countries, and never, perhaps since their first discovery by the Tyrians, have the British Isles been so confined in their intercourse with the world. From the Dardanelles, where Mr. Adair remains on board his frigate, waiting probably for a new revolution in Constantinople, the last having happened under the influence of the French; from the Dardanelles to the Baltic, where Admiral Keates is stated to be most unfortunately frozen up, near the coast of Zealand, with one ship of the line and from 16 to 20 English vessels, there does not appear, in this extent of coast, any safe or free footing for Englishmen, but on the rock of Gibraltar.

In *Sweden* the late events leave little hope that the reception of British vessels, in her ports, can much longer be tolerated. It is rumoured, indeed, that discontents have been manifested not only among the Swedish Nobility but through all ranks of people in that country, nor is it surprizing, that the honest, plain, and sensible Swede should be puzzled to find out any possible reason, except the *personal* one of £100,000, per month, subsidy from Britain, which can operate for a continuance of a war with the united powers of France and Russia, a war totally without *public*

end or advantage, and which has already occasioned a dismemberment of the kingdom. No doubt the general discontent is instigated in some degree, both by the French and the Russian parties, and it is not the first example of the present times where the follies and errors of the sovereign have been suffered to proceed to such a length, as to afford a plausible ground for the interference of Bonaparte, and an accommodation in consequence to the new organization of Europe.

From *Portugal*, the exclusion of the British, if it has not actually taken place, appears inevitable. The British troops have been withdrawn from Elvas, and the other frontier towns; the fortresses of St. Julien, and Belesme, dismantled; Oporto occupied by the French shortly after the engagement at Corunna, and Lisbon itself has been left like Madrid, to the defence of the inhabitants, and to the virtue of patriotic proclamations. It is at best but a sort of fungous patriotism, which such publications are calculated to excite among an inert, and illiterate people; and the truth is, that, throughout the whole peninsula, including Spain with Portugal, the inhabitants have been so long kept, by the voluntary neglect of government, in a state of moral and intellectual debasement, that when the hour arrives which calls for the best energies of human nature, it becomes easier to summon up the ghosts of the dead, than a spirit in the living.

Bonaparte, it is said, is about to make a new line of demarcation in the peninsula, or rather to revive the old one first adopted by Charlemagne, in which Portugal is to be reunited to Spain, and Lisbon that grand Port, lying so favourably to the western ocean, will probably become the great naval emporium. The Ebro to be made the eastern boundary of the kingdom, and Biscay, Navarre, Arragon, and Catalonia are to be added to France. Thus the passes of the mountains will remain in the possession of the French, and the figure of speech which Louis the XIV. made use of to Philip of Anjou, when he placed him on the throne of Spain, will be realized; "Henceforth there are to be *no* Pyrenees." The Pyrenees seem to have operated as a sort of natural bar to the improvement of Spain, by cutting it off from the rest of Europe, and on their *political* removal, the Spaniards will probably rise to a higher European value, and a more just estimation, by a readier communication with the nations on the continent. The Merino sheep have hitherto enjoyed more of the notice of government in this part of the world, than the melioration of society, and Spain furnishes one of many examples to prove that the vices and virtues of a people are almost always the effect of a bad or a good legislation; producing either that vilification which gradually beggars the national character, or that self-valuation, which makes a people respected by their Government. Man in the full and quiet possession of all his rights, never fails to pay a just attention to the performance of his duties. How many experiments to improve the breed of inferior animals! how few to educate men to the high destination of which they are capable!

Of the state of *Spain*, since the evacuation of Corunna, it is not easy to speak with certainty. We have been the victims of misinformation, and if the Juntas have done their utmost to keep their own country in the dark, it cannot be expected that the real situation, either of military, or political affairs, will be known in Great Britain. In the centre of Spain, it is said, that the van of the Duke of Infantado's army consisting of 12,000 men, is dispersed or destroyed, that he himself, denominated in the French Bulletins, *a man of straw*, had retired to Albaciti; that Reding's army in Catalonia has experienced nearly the same fate, and that there is now scarcely any body of Spanish troops collected in any part of the South, and South eastern parts of the peninsula. It is indeed inconceivable that any effectual resistance can be made against the French armies by the natives of Spain in the open field; a resistance at all times extremely problematical, but now wholly impracticable, and it is extremely probable that the supreme Junta, has by this time, intimated to

the British Cabinet, the necessity of succumbing to the French usurpation. Joseph has made his triumphal entry into Madrid, and received the homage of all the constituted authorities. The expedition to Cadiz, under General Sherbrooke, will throw light upon our future connexion with the Spanish nation, and will decide whether they are in future to profess themselves the friends, or to be classed among the enemies of Britain. The convoy which consisted of forty vessels, had been dispersed, but has since proceeded from Cork, with 24 transports, to the place of their destination. The Spaniards according to the last accounts, were busy in strengthening the fortifications of Cadiz, but if it be an object of the British expedition to take the French fleet from our allies, to whose faith and honour it was submitted; this will, it is to be feared, be a source of serious dissension, fatal to the treaty so lately ratified; and the attack of Cadiz by the British may have consequences similar to those which resulted from the affair at Copenhagen. On the 28th ult. no English troops had arrived, nor was it known that the Spanish Government *would admit* an English garrison into the fortress of Cadiz. The arrival in London, of that most experienced diplomatic character, Don Pedro Cevallos, may prevent any misunderstanding arising between the Junta and the British Cabinet, but it may be perhaps improper to place implicit confidence in the communications of this pendulating politician, as evidence of the unanimous resolution of the people of Spain. There has been much of mutual dupery in the whole business, and if the Spanish nation be true to itself, it will wish no longer to be made a pretext for the introduction or continuance of civil war in their country, with all its calamitous consequences. On much the same principle that Dumourier was distrusted, Don Pedro Cevallos ought not to pass the antichamber, much less partake in the confidence of the Cabinet. It now appears certain that there always has been a powerful party in Spain, attached to the interests of France, and that this party has its share even in the military councils of the Junta.

General Liniers has raised the standard of independence in *South America*, and declared his intentions to shake off the dominion of Spain. He maintains his power over the whole viceroyalty, with the exception of the district of Monte Video, which has proclaimed Ferdinand VII. and established a Junta for the management of their affairs. Liniers is suspected of partiality to the French, and a civil war will probably be soon kindled in these colonies.

The treaty with the Junta of Seville is said to be ratified, exchanged, and ready to be laid on the table of the two houses of Parliament. We are to be allowed to assist in the garrisons of Cadiz, Carthagena, Cueta, and Minorca, during the war.

An immediate attack is projected by Murat, against the Island of *Sicily*, the result of which, in its present state, must be contemplated with serious apprehension.

In the island of *Jamaica*, a difference between the executive and legislative authorities, disturbs the tranquillity of the island, and hitherto there is no prospect of conciliation. The house of assembly vindicates its right, as grand inquest of the island, to investigate the circumstances of a mutiny which happened at Fort Augusta, and of compelling the commander in chief, to give evidence before them, as to the facts of that mutiny. The inhabitants of the island join with the assembly, and the Governor takes part with the Commander in chief.

In *America*, the President, Mr. Maddison, and Vice President, Mr. Clinton, have been elected by the peaceable expression of the public will, and whatever agitation this election may have occasioned among the people, individually, it has never had the smallest effect upon their political union. The embargo (first passed 22d, December 1807) is still in force, and enacts that all persons infringing the act, are to be held guilty of a high misdemeanour, and to forfeit treble the value of the merchandize connected with the offence. The inform-

er to have half the value on conviction. The Non-intercourse bill (2d. January 1809) prohibits all ships entering the harbours of the United States, belonging either to Great Britain or France, and imposes fine and imprisonment upon persons assisting in such purposes, the vessels and cargoes to be seized and condemned. The eleventh section empowers the President to abrogate this act so far as relates to Great Britain or France, should the Orders in Council of the one, or Decrees of Berlin of the other, be rescinded. It is said that the law for enforcing the Embargo is to be repealed, when the non-intercourse act becomes operative, but the dates of *its* commencement are still uncertain, and it is highly probable it will not commence till June next, in which interval the British Government may take advantage of the eleventh section.

In a debate in the House of Lords, in which Lord Grenville moved an address to his majesty to rescind the Orders in Council, the question against the motion was carried by a division of 115 against 70, a very formidable minority, and whose union, and exertions may yet be successful. It was stated in the debate, that from the operation of these Orders in Council, the diminution of our commerce has become of alarming magnitude amounting in one year ending 20th October, 1808, to a diminution of £6,200,000 in the exports, and of £5,200,000, in the imports, in which statement neither Ireland nor Scotland, a great part of whose trade was with America, is included; and giving to them a proportional share, the diminution of commerce may be fairly estimated at £14,000,000. In the article of wool, the staple commodity, and in many other articles, an alarming diminution has taken place, and also in the importation of raw materials essential to our manufactures, a number of cotton mills have been stopped, and the workmen thrown out of employ; £14,000 has been subscribed at Manchester for the relief of manufacturers out of employment. In Lancashire there were 30,000 weavers subsisting on charity. The great importance of the linen manufacture of Ireland is well known, and the difficulty of procuring flax-seed is at present a serious evil; of 45,000 hogsheads required for sowing, 35,000 must be procured from America. The price of flax-seed has risen from 2 to £3 a quarter, to from 22 to 24*l*. It is now February, and if the necessary quantity of flax-seed be not procured before May, the consequenses will indeed be serious. The prospect at present was that in the course of next summer half a million would be thrown out of employment in the North of Ireland. The Orders in Council, unjust in their principle, are now proved to be most injurious in their effects to the interests of this country, whilst the pretence on which they were founded is now completely taken away, it being proved to a demonstration that America does not acquiesce in the infringement of her neutral rights, by the decrees of France. The result of this debate in the House of Lords, still leads us to a more confident expectation, that the wise system of self-defensive neutrality, adopted by the American States, and their consistency and determination in maintaining it, will operate most powerfully in procuring peace to the world.

The War indeed *goes on*, without having any very evident end to be attained, but continues as it were by *habit*; so many classes of the community are interested in its continuance; the military organization of the country is so completed (the effective army amounting to 210,614, of which there are 27,376 Cavalry, and the effective militia of the three kingdoms amounting to 81,577 rank and file, while the navy consists of 150,000 seamen, including 31,000 marines) the facility of supporting so great an establishment being reduced at length to such a *system*, and the ways and means, at all times, so cheerfully and readily supplyed, in short, the resources of the country have been converted by the financiering abilities of Mr. Pitt, into an instrument so readily attained, and so easily disposable, that even the most moderate ministry find themselves irresistibly tempted to follow up the war, without well knowing where it is about to lead them,

rather than risque the disorganization of the military system, and the partial injury resulting from peace to several classes of the community. One great source of national calamity in the indefinite prolongation of the war, has we think arisen from the domestic coalition first strongly connected by Pitt, we mean the mutual understanding, and strict junction of the ministry in power, with the commercial interest, by which every scheme of ambition has been facilitated to the one, and war itself has been turned into a sort of speculation to reward the other. It is from this intimate alliance and collusion of the ministerial and monied interests, that a fatal fallacy has been propagated with success, through every rank in society, viz. that the preservation of our rights and privileges, the salvation of the constitution, even the very existence of the nation are indissolubly and necessarily implicated with a *certain* extension of commerce, and a *certain* degree of maritime ascendancy. Thus, the union of two party interests, with respect to the Empire, have gained such influence over private opinion, as, in its consequences, to compromise the public safety, and induce a belief that the prolongation of the war is altogether necessary and unavoidable. Do your best to secure to us the monopoly of the world, and we will go every length to secure to you, the ways and means for carrying on the war. Such is the compact, and even when cut off from the continent, the colonies of South America glitter in speculation. Thus the respective parties transfuse their actuating principles into each other; the principle of the mercantile system, rejected by true philosophy, is still cherished as a ruling maxim of state; and the commercial interest becomes actuated and infected with the ambition of the Cabinet, and the spirit of adventure; and hence must result not an open, enlarged, and generous policy, but a sort of politico-commercial, Carthaginian policy, which injures, and degrades the British character in the estimation of foreign nations. It is only by a revival of the true British policy, equally wise and magnanimous, which seats itself on the square and sound-set basis of the rights of Man (and we scorn the man, who would vilify the sacred worth of the expression) extending these blessings to all with whom it wishes alliance or connexion; it is only by such generous policy, that Britain can *overreach* Bonaparte, and by making this policy the practical guide of her foreign relations, she may yet be able to redeem the world.

With respect to the DOMESTIC branch of British politics, the public attention has been wholly absorbed in the examination carried on in the House of Commons; a parliamentary inquiry altogether unexpected, either by Ministry or Opposition. Our opinion of its importance is such, that we believe it may lead to all the beneficial effects of a revolution, without any of its horrors. Not only the mere subject before the House, but the House itself, in the words of Mr. Wilberforce, is put *on trial* before the scrutinizing tribunal of public opinion; and we think the nation highly indebted to Mr. Perceval and the other ministers, in bringing the matter before *the whole house*, whatever might be their feelings, and their fears of giving personal offence, by this display of public duty. They perhaps had little foresight of all the consequences of this procedure; but the subject is now elevated, by *their* means, upon a stage so high as to attract the attention of Europe; and the House of Commons is now called on to vindicate in the sight of mankind the virtue of the British constitution, which protects the lowest, and will not be contaminated by the corruption of the highest order, with impunity. Never will there occur a more grand opportunity of accomplishing such a reformation in the manners and morals of a country, as may help to avert the judgments of Heaven, and if Britain be destined to sink in the present contest, to call forth the sympathy of the present, and future ages in her fall.